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LOST OPPORTUNITIES

When the Reagan Administration first came into office, it seemed for a considerable period determined to repudiate totally policies that had dominated postwar U.S. foreign policy. Senior officials publicly compared the Soviet Union to Napoleonic France—or worse; they suggested that arms control negotiations should not be convened until Soviet behavior in the world's trouble spots improved—an unlikely prospect if the Administration's assessment of the nature of the Soviet regime was even partially correct. The Reagan Administration not only refused to ratify the SALT II treaty, with its limitations on future deployments, but also appeared ready to refuse to honor these restraints even informally. When arms talks did begin, the Administration waited months to develop its proposals, and then tabled suggestions so unbalanced that the only possible purpose could be to ensure that they would be non-negotiable, as then Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Jr., subsequently pronounced some of them. The Administration veered so dangerously far from the policy toward the People's Republic of China laid down by three previous administrations that Mr. Haig warned of a new estrangement of Beijing.

Careful consideration of the effects and nature of changes wrought by the Reagan Administration in rhetoric and defense alone should cause analysts to reassess the facile conclusion that this administration is more or less like any other. But when changes in other areas are also considered, then the case seems persuasive that many earlier assessments understate the Reagan record of change, a record that merits more sober evaluation in terms of the benefits or costs it has brought to the American people. In addition to rhetoric and defense, significant policy shifts have occurred in five other areas.

Third World Policy. The Reagan Administration has consistently stressed instruments of force in its policy toward the Third World. Total U.S. foreign aid nearly doubled between 1981 and 1985 to reach a level of \$19.2 billion. But the portion of the aid budget devoted to security concerns rose from roughly half of the fiscal year 1981 foreign aid budget to more than two-thirds of the FY 1985 budget. The Administration plans to raise this portion further, to more than 70 percent, by FY 1988. The Administration has used military force in Grenada and Lebanon and against Libya. It has threatened the use of military force against Iran, Nicaragua and Syria. It has conducted menacing military maneuvers near Cuba and Nicaragua.

Although the records are necessarily classified, it is well known that the Central Intelligence Agency has received a sharp increase in funding during the Reagan Administration. The agency has helped to plan or direct the mining of the harbors of Nicaragua, the writing of pamphlets that appear to condone the assassination of Nicaraguan officials, the raising of private funds for the counterrevolutionary forces in Nicaragua after congressional prohibitions blocked official funding, and the general management of an effort that every observer outside the government believes is designed to topple the Sandinista regime, a congressional prohibition against this step notwithstanding. The attitude of the Administration toward the issue of CIA accountability is suggested by a speech given by CIA Director William Casey in October 1984 before the Association of Former Intelligence Officers. He contended: "With few exceptions, the highly publicized charges made against the CIA during the mid-seventies turned out to be false." As his predecessor, Stansfield Turner, has acknowledged, the statement is "both inaccurate and dangerous," because it leads to the conclusion that oversight is not necessary.

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